

Polk County

CASE
SUMMARY

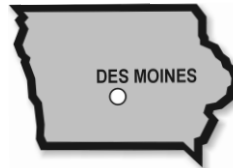
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POLK COUNTY

Department of General Services
Des Moines, Iowa
Polk County

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Major: Environmental Science and Policy
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The Agency

Polk County, Iowa, is currently home to 374,601 residents and comprises over 591 square miles. Polk County is a service-oriented public entity and the General Services Department is responsible for procurement of supplies and facilities management for all County government. The County employs over 900 people, and 273 work at the Administrative Office Building (AOB).

Project Background

Polk County has received funding from Recycle, Iowa, and the Solid Waste Alternative Program (SWAP) of the DNR to promote resource conservation and environmental management in County operations. The County owns 26 buildings and leases additional space for a total of over 90 buildings and 1.4 million square feet of space. Facility use includes senior centers, correctional facilities, offices, maintenance buildings, the Court House and performance/convention complexes.

Incentives to Change

Quantity and disposal records for solid waste and recycling have not been centrally maintained. Many departments are housed within the AOB and waste management practices were not implemented building wide. Energy and resource conservation offers an opportunity for significant cost savings throughout the County, and the development of an Environmental Management System (EMS) will allow the County to work toward sustainable operations.

Results

The internship consisted of the development of three main projects, the results of which are summarized below.

Waste Audit and Survey: A recycling survey was prepared for use at the AOB and additional buildings as the project progresses. On-site waste audits were conducted at the AOB and the Polk County Jail, where waste streams were identified and quantified. Pollution prevention recommendations were made and improvements in material storage, handling, and disposal suggested. In conjunction with Metro Waste Authority, the County has plans to conduct 14 additional audits.

Recycling Opportunities: Paper is by far the largest waste stream at the AOB. Mapping the "paper trail" from point of generation to point of disposal, and assigning costs for purchase, printing, storage, handling, and disposal provides the detail to promote the modification of procedures and the implementation of source reduction and recycling programs.



The following waste streams were identified for recycling improvements at the AOB.

Pollution prevention opportunity	Annual waste reduction	Cost savings
Corrugated cardboard	10.8 tons	\$356
Mixed office paper	136.8 tons	\$4,514
Bound materials/books	57.6 tons	\$1,901
Pop cans/bottles	0.7 tons	\$24

Additional opportunities include the diversion of electronics and pallets from the waste stream. These opportunities are under further study at the present time.

Environmental Management System (EMS): To promote the sustainability of pollution prevention and energy efficiency projects, recommendations were made to guide the development of an Environmental Management System for the County. The implementation of this system will make Polk County one of the first public agencies in Iowa to complete an environmental document to guide operations and procedures throughout the organization.